

Environmental Assessment Checklist

Project Name: Farnum Driveway Easement

Proposed Implementation Date: 8/2023

Proponent: Missoula Unit, Southwest Land Office, Montana DNRC

County: Missoula

Type and Purpose of Action

Description of Proposed Action:

Bonnie Farnum is proposing the Farnum Driveway easement. The project is located east of Bonner, MT (refer to Attachments vicinity map A-1 and project map A-2) and includes the following sections:

Beneficiary	Legal Description	Total Acres	Easement Acres
Common Schools	Sec 36 T14N R17W	580	4.57
Public Buildings			
MSU 2 nd Grant			
MSU Morrill			
Eastern College-MSU/Western College-U of M			
Montana Tech			
University of Montana			
School for the Deaf and Blind			
Pine Hills School			
Veterans Home			
Public Land Trust			
Acquired Land			

Bonnie Farnum would like to purchase a 30 foot easement across approximately 6,636 feet of existing road in the above mentioned parcel to access her residence. The request is access for two family residence (One existing and a future residence). In 2021 a historic easement was issued for the driveway the Farnum's had previously used. However the adjoining landowner decided they no longer wanted to grant the Farnum's access to use their portion of the route and only allowed use of the road to the west. This change caused the DNRC historic easement to no longer be effective, which causes Bonnie Farnum to no longer have legal access to her parcel.

The lands involved in this proposed project are held in trust by the State of Montana. (Enabling Act of February 22, 1889; 1972 Montana Constitution, Article X, Section 11). The Board of Land Commissioners and the DNRC are required by law to administer these trust lands to produce the largest measure of reasonable and legitimate return over the long run for the beneficiary institutions (Section 77-1-202, MCA).

The DNRC would manage lands involved in this project in accordance with:

- The Access Road Easement Policy-Montana Board Land Commissioners, September 18, (DNRC 2006)
- The State Forest Land Management Plan (DNRC 1996),
- Administrative Rules for Forest Management (ARM 36.11.401 through 471),
- and all other applicable state and federal laws.

Project Development

SCOPING:

- Internal scoping took place in the summer of 2023.
- DNRC specialists were consulted, including: Andrea Stanley, Hydrologist/soil scientist, Garrett Schairer, Wildlife Biologist and Scott Allen Missoula Unit Forest Management Supervisor.
- Portions of this EA were teared to the Goldielogs EA analysis.

OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED: *(Conservation Easements, Army Corps of Engineers, road use permits, etc.)*

- **United States Fish & Wildlife Service-** DNRC is managing the habitats of threatened and endangered species on this project by implementing the Montana DNRC Forested Trust Lands HCP and the associated Incidental Take Permit that was issued by the United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) in February of 2012 under Section 10 of the Endangered Species Act. The HCP identifies specific conservation strategies for managing the habitats of grizzly bear, Canada lynx, and three fish species: bull trout, westslope cutthroat trout, and Columbia redband trout. This project complies with the HCP. The HCP can be found at <http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/trust/forest-management/hcp>.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

No-Action Alternative: Deny the application for an easement. No change to existing use.

Action Alternative Issue an easement for a two family residence (one existing and one future) on 6,636 feet of existing road currently being used for the proposed purpose. The easement would be 30 feet wide and contain approximately 4.57 acres.

Impacts on the Physical Environment

Evaluation of the impacts on the No-Action and Action Alternatives including **direct, secondary, and cumulative** impacts on the Physical Environment.

VEGETATION:

Vegetation on the proposed easement is limited to grass growing on the existing road. The proposal does include reconstructing a curve so vehicles can more easily turn into the residence. This reconstruction may impact .1 acre of merchantable trees as well as some brush, forbes and grasses. Given the existing condition and the small size of the potential curve reconstruction impacts to vegetation would be minor.

SOIL DISTURBANCE AND PRODUCTIVITY:

Soils along the proposed easement are Bignell and Bignell Winkler, cool, complex. Both soil types are gravelly clay loam with a moderate erosion factor. Infiltration is slow when soils are thoroughly wet due to clays being present at shallow depths. Roads within the easement area either currently meet BMP's or will once the Goldielogs timber sale is complete. For a more information regarding soils within the section please refer to the Goldielogs Environmental Analysis that can be found on the DNRC webpage: [04-28-2023 EA Goldielogs-Timber-Sale.pdf \(mt.gov\)](#)

No-Action: Continued use of the road by the easement applicant at existing rates. This will continue wear on the road surface. The Goldielogs timber sale will make improvements to the road prism as necessary in order to comply with BMP's.

Action Alternative: Continued use of the road by the easement applicant at existing rates. This will continue wear on the road surface. Reconstructing the curve in the road to access the residence would cause some soil to be exposed. These areas would be grass seeded following reconstruction. The Goldielogs timber sale will make improvements to the road prism as necessary in order to comply with BMP's.

Maintenance done during the Goldielogs timber sale will bring the existing roads up to BMP's and the reconstructed curve would be grass seeded. As a result the proposed easement impact would be minor.

WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY:

There are no stream crossings on the proposed access route. The nearest surface water feature to the proposed easement is Warm Springs Creek. It is located approximately 500 feet northeast of the existing road.

No risk of change to water quality or quantity is expected with the action and no-action alternatives since the proposed use is already occurring on the ground, the proposal would just

legitimize the existing use. For the above mentioned reasons impacts to water and water quality are expected to be minor.

FISHERIES:

Warm Springs Creek is a fish bearing stream and has been surveyed by MFWP and DNRC personnel in 1998, 2010, and 2021. During all surveys no native species were collected or observed, indicating that the likely historic population of Westslope cutthroat has been locally extirpated (see Goldielogs EA for tables and complete fisheries analysis).

No risk of change to fisheries or fish habitat are expected with the action alternative beyond what is already occurring under the no-action alternative. Due to the distance (500 feet) to surface water, and the limited scope (up to 2 residence road use of existing road) of the proposed project effects to fisheries beyond what is occurring under the no action alternative are expected to be minor.

WILDLIFE:

Wildlife Existing Conditions: Refer to the Goldielogs EA for wildlife existing conditions.

No-Action: The easement location would continue to be used as an unauthorized driveway. Continued use at existing levels by wildlife species presently found in the project area would be anticipated. No further disturbance to wildlife would be anticipated. Generally, negligible direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would occur from not granting the easement.

Action Alternative:

No changes to existing habitats would occur. Because the easement proposal is currently being used as a driveway no further disturbance to wildlife in the project area would be anticipated. In general, no appreciable changes to wildlife use of the project area would occur with the granting of the easement. Generally, minor direct, indirect, or cumulative effects beyond what is already occurring would occur from granting the easement.

AIR QUALITY:

Air Quality	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
<i>No-Action</i>														
Smoke	X													
Dust	X													
<i>Action</i>														
Smoke	X													
Dust	X													

Comments: Given the fact that this road is currently being used as access to the Farnum residence, no changes in the existing condition would occur in regard to dust.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES / AESTHETICS / DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Will Alternative result in potential impacts to:	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
No-Action														
Historical or Archaeological Sites	X				X				X					
Aesthetics	X				X				X					
Demands on Environmental Resources of Land, Water, or Energy	X				X				X					
Action														
Historical or Archaeological Sites	X				X				X					
Aesthetics	X				X				X					
Demands on Environmental Resources of Land, Water, or Energy	X				X				X					

Comments: This segment of road is currently being used as a driveway, so no effects to the resources listed above would be anticipated by granting an easement to legitimize existing use.

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA: *List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.*

- Goldielogs Timber Sale EA [04-28-2023 EA Goldielogs-Timber-Sale.pdf \(mt.gov\)](#)

Impacts on the Human Population

Evaluation of the impacts on the proposed action including **direct, secondary, and cumulative** impacts on the Human Population.

Will Alternative result in potential impacts to:	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
No-Action														
Health and Human Safety	X				X				X					
Industrial, Commercial and	X				X				X					

Will Alternative result in potential impacts to:	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
Agricultural Activities and Production														
Quantity and Distribution of Employment	X				X				X					
Local Tax Base and Tax Revenues	X				X				X					
Demand for Government Services	X				X				X					
Access To and Quality of Recreational and Wilderness Activities	X				X				X					
Density and Distribution of population and housing	X				X				X					
Social Structures and Mores	X				X				X					
Cultural Uniqueness and Diversity	X				X				X					
Action														
Health and Human Safety	X				X				X					
Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural Activities and Production	X				X				X					
Quantity and Distribution of Employment	X				X				X					
Local Tax Base and Tax Revenues	X				X				X					
Demand for Government Services	X				X				X					
Access To and Quality of Recreational and Wilderness Activities	X				X				X					
Density and Distribution of population and housing	X				X				X					
Social Structures and Mores	X				X				X					
Cultural Uniqueness and Diversity	X				X				X					

Comments: The segment of road is currently being used as a driveway. Issuing an easement would not change existing uses and would have no effect on the above mentioned resources.

Locally Adopted Environmental Plans and Goals: *List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.*

- None

Other Appropriate Social and Economic Circumstances:

The Trust Land Management Division mission is to manage the State of Montana's Trust Land resources to produce revenues for the trust beneficiaries while considering environmental factors and protecting the future income-generating capacity of the land.

No Action: The No Action alternative would not generate any return to the trust at this time.

Action: The proposed project would grant the Farnum right-of-way across Trust Lands. Basemap has the value for this parcel at \$800/Acre, which is consistent with the Unit Office's consideration of value for this area. The easement corridor is 4.57 Acres = \$3,656 + 1% Conveyance fee for 2nd residence of \$2,100 = \$5,756. Credit given for current easement of \$1,248, for a total easement value of \$4,508.

References

DNRC. 1996. State forest land management plan: final environmental impact statement (and appendixes). Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Forest Management Bureau, Missoula, Montana.

DNRC. 2010. Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Forested State Trust Lands Habitat Conservation Plan: Final EIS, Volume II, Forest Management Bureau, Missoula, Montana.

Does the proposed action involve potential risks or adverse effects that are uncertain but extremely harmful if they were to occur?

No

Does the proposed action have impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or potentially significant?

No

Environmental Assessment Checklist Prepared By:

Name: Amy Helena
Title: Missoula Unit Manager
Date: 7/22/2023

Finding

Alternative Selected

The Southwestern Land Office recommends the selection of the **Action Alternative**. The Action Alternative complies with the intent of ROW statute 77-2-102 and the Access Road Easement Policy (DNRC 2006). Granting the proponent an easement will not have significant impacts.

Significance of Potential Impacts

No substantial or unacceptable, detrimental impacts to water, soil, fisheries, Threatened and Endangered or Sensitive Species are anticipated resulting from the selection of the action alternative.

Need for Further Environmental Analysis

☐

EIS

☐

More Detailed EA

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No Further Analysis

Environmental Assessment Checklist Approved By:

Name: Sierra Farmer

Title: Trustlands Program Manager

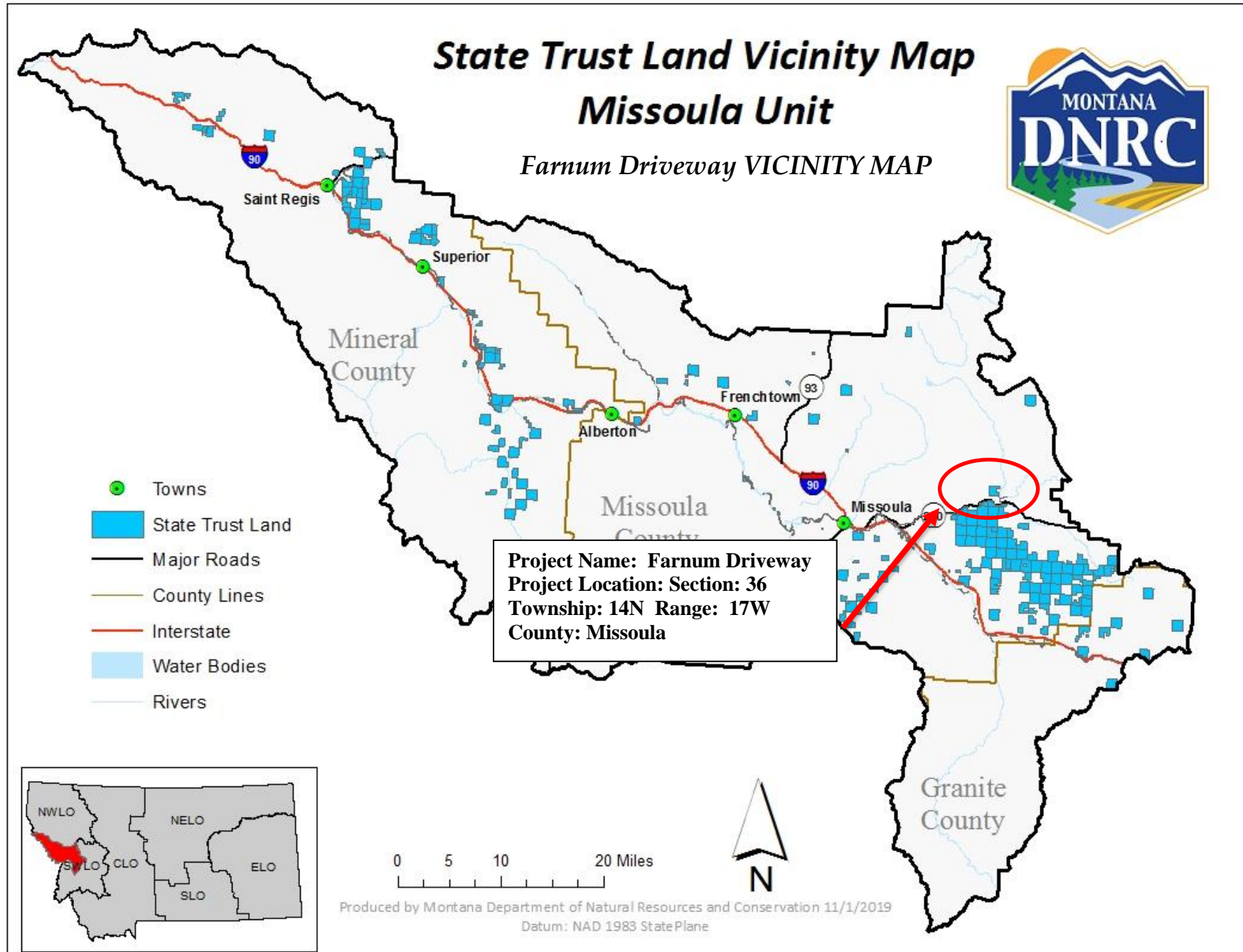
Date: July 24, 2023

Signature:



Attachment A - Maps

A-1: Easement Vicinity Map



A-2: Farnum Driveway Easement Proposal

